

IN THE CLAIMS

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1. (Currently Amended) A controller comprising:

a receiving unit for receiving a mail transmitted from a management unit via a communication network;

an analyzing unit for analyzing the received mail to obtain data on an expiration date and time; and

a control unit for controlling an apparatus based on the received mail when the validity of the mail has not expired.

2. (Original) A controller as claimed in claim 1, wherein the apparatus is a copying machine.

3. (Original) A controller as claimed in claim 1, wherein the mail is transmitted in packets.

4. (Original) A management system comprising:

an apparatus;

a management unit being connected to the apparatus via a network and for transmitting data for managing the apparatus; and

a control unit being connected between the management unit and the apparatus for determining whether the validity of data transmitted from the management unit has expired or not, and for permitting transmission of data whose validity has not expired to the apparatus.

5. (Original) A management system as claimed in claim 4, wherein the apparatus is a copying machine.

6. (Original) A management system as claimed in claim 4, wherein the network is the Internet.

7. (Original) A management system as claimed in claim 4, wherein the management unit transmits data in packets.

8. (Currently Amended) A control unit in which apparatus management data is transmitted and received to and from an apparatus by first communicating means, and a packet addressed to a centralized management unit is sent out to a communication network and a packet from the communication network addressed to itself is taken in by second communicating means, said control unit comprising:

~~counting~~ clock means for providing current time;

analyzing means for analyzing the packet taken in by said second communicating means; and

expiration date and time managing means for permitting transmission of the apparatus management data included in the packet to said apparatus on condition that a the current time obtained from said ~~counting~~ clock means is not past an expiration date and time of the packet analyzed by said analyzing means.

9. (Currently Amended) A control unit as claimed in claim 8, wherein when the current time obtained from said counting clock means is past the expiration date and time of the packet analyzed by said analyzing means, said expiration date and time managing means transmits a packet including data representing that the current date and time is past the expiration date and time to the communication network by said second communicating means.

10. (Original) A control unit as claimed in claim 8, wherein said communication network is the Internet.

11. (Currently Amended) A control unit as claimed in claim 8, further comprising threshold value storing means for holding threshold value information deciding a period for which the apparatus management data is valid,

wherein said expiration date and time managing means determines whether or not the current time is not past the expiration date and time based on a transmission date and time included in the packet analyzed by said analyzing means, the threshold value information held by the threshold value storing means and the current time obtained from said counting clock means.

12. (Original) A control unit as claimed in claim 11, wherein said threshold value storing means holds threshold value information deciding an expiration date and time of each apparatus management data.

13. (Currently Amended) A control unit as claimed in claim 8, wherein said expiration date and time managing means determines whether or not the current time is not past the expiration date and time based on expiration date and time information included in the packet analyzed by said analyzing means and the current time obtained from said counting clock means.

91 14. (Currently Amended) A management system that manages apparatuses connected to a plurality of apparatus management units by transmitting and receiving a packet including apparatus management data between a centralized management unit and the apparatus management units via a communication network,

wherein said centralized management unit comprises:

expiration date and time setting means for setting expiration date and time information of the apparatus management data; and

communication network for sending out a packet being addressed to a specified apparatus management unit and including the expiration date and time information to the communication network, and taking in a packet from the communication network addressed to itself, and

wherein said apparatus management units each comprises:

first communicating means for transmitting and receiving the apparatus management data to and from the apparatus;

second communicating means for sending out a packet addressed to said centralized management unit to the communication network, and taking in a packet from the communication network addressed to itself;

~~counting clock means for providing current time;~~

analyzing means for analyzing the packet taken in by said second communicating means; and

expiration date and time managing means for permitting transmission of the apparatus management data included in the packet to the apparatus connected to said apparatus management unit on condition that a the current time obtained from said ~~counting clock~~ means is not past an expiration date and time represented by the expiration date and time information included in the packet analyzed by said analyzing means.

15. (Currently Amended) A management system that manages apparatuses connected to a plurality of apparatus management units by transmitting and receiving a packet including apparatus management data between a centralized management unit and the apparatus management units via a communication network,

wherein said centralized management unit comprises:

~~counting means~~ expiration date and time setting means for setting expiration date and time information of the apparatus management data; and

communication network for sending out to the communication network a packet being addressed to a specified apparatus management unit and including ~~a current time obtained from said counting means as~~ expiration date and time information from the expiration date and time setting means, and taking in a packet from the communication network addressed to itself, and

wherein said apparatus management units each comprises:

first communicating means for transmitting and receiving the apparatus management data to and from the apparatus;

second communicating means for sending out a packet addressed to said centralized management unit to the communication network, and taking in a packet from the communication network addressed to itself;

counting clock means for providing current time;

analyzing means for analyzing the packet taken in by said second communicating means;

threshold value storing means for holding threshold value information deciding a period for which the apparatus management data is valid; and

expiration date and time managing means for permitting transmission of the apparatus management data included in the packet to the apparatus connected to said apparatus management unit on condition that a the current time obtained from said counting clock means is not past an expiration date and time obtained from transmission date and time information included in the packet analyzed by said analyzing means and the threshold value information held by said threshold value storing means.

16. (Currently Amended) A controlling method comprising the steps of:  
receiving a mail transmitted from a management unit via a communication network;  
analyzing the received mail to obtain data on an expiration date and time; and  
controlling an apparatus based on the received mail when the validity of the mail has not expired.